



State of Washington

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N Olympia, WA 98501-1091 (360) 902-2222, TDD (360) 902-2207

Main Office Location: Natural Resources Building 1111 Washington Street SE Olympia, WA

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Ad hoc Stakeholder Respondents

Subject: Response to comments - Statewide Steelhead Management Plan

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (Department) Statewide Steelhead Management Plan DRAFT was released for comment on December 22, 2006 with a follow-up Ad hoc stakeholder meeting on January 9, 2007 to review and receive preliminary input on the contents of the document. Subsequent to the meeting, several written comments were received by the Department as well. Many comments were insightful, constructive and formed the basis for a number of revisions or clarifications within the Department's revised DRAFT (Attachment A). In addition, although the Department received a number of written comments, consistent themes became evident. Thus the Department has opted to respond to the comments through a single letter organized by the themes within the stakeholder comments.

Wild, Natural, Native or Locally Adapted Steelhead

Stakeholders, tribes, local entities, and other state and federal agencies use a variety of terms to describe steelhead stocks relative to their origin within the context of a watershed. Furthermore, stakeholders and staff used several terms to describe steelhead stocks during the meetings. The lack of a consistent and clear definition often resulted in confusion and debates regarding the intent of the Department's policies, strategies, and actions. Clarifying the Department's definition is crucial for evaluating how steelhead will be conserved and managed. Rebuilding criteria for some of the currently federally listed ESA populations represents the underpinning for the Department's decision to use the term "wild"; defined as "naturally produced fish from a locally adapted stock regardless of origin or parentage". Further definitions for "wild fish" and "wild-origin" can be located in 'Definitions' of the statewide steelhead management plan on page 35.

Long term goal for rebuilding and conserving Washington's steelhead

A long-term goal is crucial in defining the scope of the Department's management actions, and thus establishes a benchmark from which management can be assessed. Several comments suggested four main alternatives for a long-term goal:

- 1) Historical abundance levels extending beyond those currently described in the 'steelhead science paper':